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ABSTRACT

In a speech presented before the 1971 Annual Spring Conference of the NCVGA, the speaker addressed herself to a discussion of some of the major findings of the Bay Area Labor Market Project, begun in 1966 at the University of California in Berkeley, and intended to explore the functioning of a large metropolitan labor market, the relationship between various participants and the interactions between various labor market practices and policies. Some findings were that while the employment level in the Bay Area had grown enormously during the sixties, the labor force had grown younger, presenting problems of supervision and "employability". Agency managers as well as school counselors felt that neither their staffs nor potential employees had sufficient knowledge of the local labor market. In response to this situation a study of the "Requirements and Design of a Comprehensive Labor Market Information System for a Large Metropolitan Labor Market Area" was begun. An outline of this project was presented with a report of some results of the programs early stages. (BW)

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OCCUPATIONS: VALUES AND SURVIVAL

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presented at

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The theme of this conference -- "Occupations: Values and Survival" -- is one to give the speaker pause.

If he wishes his remarks to fall within subject matter areas intended for coverage by conference management, our speaker must inevitably ask himself -- "what is the import of these words?"

Early in my consideration of this definitional problem it occurred to me that these words can have as many different meanings to those who hear them as there are differences of viewpoint among the listeners.

I feel certain that these words have a meaning for members of the counter culture that is not universally shared. They have a significance for many makers of candles and hand-tooled leather belts, for certain organic vegetable growers and seekers after vocations leading to social change with which some in this room would not agree.

One can quite as safely surmise that this phrase evokes yet another response from staunch supporters of the work ethic, of unlimited free enterprise in our economy, and of minimal government planning and direction in social matters.

And I feel quite sure that these three words have yet another meaning for many business people, government workers, teachers, and others who in their value systems place a high premium on effecting social change through a reasonably orderly process of evolution. These are the people who place confidence in the

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ability of many undramatic, small (though often hard-won) improvements in the system to ensure our survival. Or, at least, they believe such improvements will do more to prolong our survival than either great leaps forward or great leaps backward.

So, as you can see, I have had my difficulties deciding how to cope with your conference theme. It does prove elusive as to meaning when one seeks some philosophical underpinning for his remarks. However, my real problem has been not so much a matter of philosophy as the very practical question -- "how can I discuss, within the framework of this conference theme what I really would like to talk about today?" -- the great need that exists, as I see it, for us to develop, to utilize, and to communicate far more and much better information about the work-world around us than we are doing at the present time.

Recourse to logic in efforts to tie these various strands together -- the need for labor market information, the words: "values," "survival" -- produces little mileage. Unfortunately, when the matter of "values" is involved, logic can prove as ineffective a tool as cost benefit analysis. Worse yet, the word "survival" carries the built-in question, "survival of what?"

But things finally did fall into place for me!

Concentration on the words "values" and "survival" reminded me of a man, once my superior in a government agency, who was as concerned with survival and mentioned the word as frequently as anyone I have ever known. He was not concerned with the survival of the species, although he did deplore and he worked to prevent the despoliation of an older California landscape that he loved. Rather, he feared for the survival of our type of society because of the continuing erosion of certain values. We already had achieved a good society that was capable, he believed, of becoming very much better if those antique virtues upon which the Republic was founded were not forgotten.

Amongst these virtues (and to him they were absolute and immutable values) was so stern a belief in the individual and social worth of hard work, in self discipline, and in individual responsibility that his attitudes would scarcely fit in with the contemporary scene. But he was completely dedicated to the belief that the only possible road to freedom and justice lies through an open society -- one where no artificial constraints because of sex, age, race or the disadvantages conferred by one's social origins can blunt the fairness of our competition for society's rewards.

This estimable public servant who blended much of the old right and the new left in his temperament worried so lengthily and so audibly about "survival" during the late 1940's and early 1950's that when he retired a group of his employees gave him a several volume set of the "Decline and Fall..." For good measure, he was also presented with a copy of the "Decline of the West."

Now, the point of my story is that before he retired, this man made the required commitments and assumed the necessary responsibility which enabled a group of us to obtain funding for and to begin work on California's Occupational Guide program. Many of you must have seen these documents, prepared by the California Department of Human Resources Development. To my surprise, as I tour the offices of employment service and school personnel in these 1970's I still find this program -- begun in the mid-1950's -- referred to in many places as about the only information resource available to supply reasonably current local information about jobs. As such, they supplement the descriptions and projections relating to the national scene which are prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and by various commercial publishers.

From the vantage point of the 1970's I believe we can view these Guides, useful as they are as only one small and early step in what must become a multi-faceted, many splendored effort to increase our store of detailed, localized

information about the world of work and to deliver this knowledge in useable form to those who need it.

It did startle me, however, to realize when I reflected on it that a large part of the drive to institute a study of occupations having these objectives came from a man greatly concerned with both survival and values. He saw clearly and maintained strongly that in a complex, technological society where the child no longer can observe his father at work, there must be some other way of conveying the realities of the work-world (and the printed page is one way) to the child. Only with some knowledge of the work-world can youth appreciate the reasons why they need training and education -- or a knowledge of the many varieties of work open to them in our complex civilization. Further, adults in this same complex civilization can decreasingly depend on the old, informal methods of job recruitment which rested on accumulated custom and tradition, or on word-of-mouth communication. They cannot if they are to be advised of the variety of jobs which they can seek or for which they can train or be retrained -- given even a half-way viable economy. Thus, the labor market intermediaries -- employment counselors and placement officers -- must (like school counselors and planners of school curricula) have some bridge over which information can flow. It must be collected from the "outside world" of employers, labor organizations, and various institutions. It must be conveyed to students, job seekers, educators, guidance counselors, manpower administrators and to many, many others.

And so, I decided that if my supervisor of more than fifteen years ago could see as frail a reed as the Occupational Guides serving to buttress the foundations of the Republic and as promoting an open society, I could stand here, and, with no apologies, describe certain recent research findings under the over-arching canopy of "Occupations: Values and Survival."

The research to which I refer has been done at the University of California in Berkeley. It was planned in 1965 and begun in 1966 under the combined funding of the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Department of Labor's Manpower Administration. It has been funded exclusively by the latter agency since 1967.

Known originally as the Bay Area Labor Market Project, this study's purpose was to explore some rather academic questions -- how does a large metropolitan labor market function? What are the relationships between various actors on the labor market scene? What are the interactions between various labor market practices and policies?

Plans frequently must be changed or abandoned and ours were no exception. Largely because of what we learned in the first phase of this research -- an investigation into the ways that employer policies were changing in a changing labor market -- we altered our strategies. We became what might be termed considerably more "practical" in our approach. We turned our backs for good or ill on certain subjects dear to the hearts of theoretical economists. And we began an investigation of the problems facing personnel in our employment security agencies and in our schools. This investigation has left those associated with the project with a lasting appreciation of both the magnitude of these problems and the efforts school and employment service people are making to resolve them.

I should like to mention a very few of the findings of this first survey of the project -- of the Bay Area Employer Policy Survey. Some of our findings were of a sort to gladden the hearts of persons like Charles Raumasset and myself and the several others who had traveled the Crystal Ball and Delphic Oracle Circuit almost a decade earlier. We had traveled this circuit of Career Days, employment counselors' meetings, school and employment service administrators' meetings and whatever, with a tightly grasped copy of a government publication

entitled Manpower, Challenge of the Sixties and sometimes with charts and graphs and slides. All of these were designed to show that the world was about to change drastically and quickly. And we learned that indeed it had as we went our appointed rounds questioning a representative sample of Bay Area employers in depth and at length.

Furthermore, we learned that many of the changes which had occurred during the tumultous sixties were definitely in line with the predictions we had made. Employment had grown enormously in some sections of the Bay Area and substantially throughout the six counties. (We included Santa Clara County in our study.) There had been significant changes in the industrial mix as well.

We found that the labor force had grown appreciably younger with all the problems of supervision that this development entails. Further the occupational composition of the work force had changed, as predicted in terms of the growing relative importance of white collar workers. In fact, the changed employer policies we studied largely reflected the efforts of employers to upgrade the skills of their work force or in some manner to attract and retain scarce skills in what was then a tight labor market.

But we found other developments that we had neither predicted nor would have wished for. The problem of out-of-school, out-of-work youth had grown over the decade. We found that employers tended to blame the schools for some, at least, of this problem. It was all too clear that employers were turning away from using the public employment service even though use of formal recruitment channels had never appeared more appropriate. Also, many employers mentioned their inability to get through to the schools with a picutre of their labor requirements despite their willingness and often their efforts to describe these needs to school faculties and administrators.

Plainly, there was a need to look at the other side of this picutre and such we set out to do at the urging of our sponsor. Thus, our next step was a

study of public and private employment agencies and of school counseling departments rather than of union policies as originally planned. I shall call this second study (more formally known as Placement and Counseling in a Changing Labor Market) Project #2.

There was a second sentence under "Major Findings" in the report of Project #2 that has caused at least a little stir. It probably shouldn't even have appeared under "Findings" because this pronouncement was no news to people like yourselves who had lived with the facts for a long while. But in the year of steady interviewing by three persons which preceded writing this report we had heard much that surprised us.

We wrote, "Neither the public employment service nor the schools of this area possess the resources required for an effective performance of the duties assigned to them over the past decade."

In Project #1 -- the study of Employer Policies -- we had found the Bay Area work force greatly increased in number and vastly transformed in composition, reflecting population growth, social change, technological change. In the laws and statutes one could see that the 60's were a decade of major manpower and educational legislation imposing new, broad responsibilities on the agencies of government and the schools. Yet here were these agencies and schools -- everywhere to be observed making bricks without straw.

We rather euphemistically called their lacks a "shortage of resources" -- yet what we meant were not alone shortages of funds (and therefore of staff and facilities) but also of information, expertise, sound administrative practices and of community consensus as to their activities.

In fact, we felt quite justified in terming as a "major finding" the extent to which both the managers of public employment service offices and the heads of school counseling departments maintained that adequate labor market information was an essential resource for the satisfactory performance of their

duties. And they maintained with equal vigor that they did not possess, in this already drastically changed and still-changing labor market, the necessary information to carry out such assigned duties as job placement, employment counseling and vocational guidance.

But let me have our respondents speak for themselves. I shall make little effort here to force the substance of their responses into any sort of structure. I believe the very confusion and blur that existed in the mass of charges and counter charges that came our way in the course of this interviewing gives some indication of the confused -- and the tremendous -- times we live in. Actually, I believe that a much stronger sense of direction as to ways out of this welter has started to emerge in recent months than could be perceived at the time of these 1969 interviews.

The managers of the public employment service were speaking from a background of unhappy circumstances. For them, they said, the combination of a rapidly changing world and the imposition of a whole new set of duties had meant the sharp curtailment of their old familiar responsibilities and taking on many new duties for which they were ill-prepared and under-supported.

An enormously expensive and time-consuming process known as "employability development" which they had assumed, called for skills and expertise in the counseling staffs that had not been required before. Also, the concentration on employability development was curtailing their employer relations programs and the inflow of job orders at more skilled occupational levels which had previously made this agency so knowledgeable about the current job market. Thus, they maintained, the labor market information required for the job development efforts of placement officers serving both disadvantaged and mainstream applicants and the store of vocational guidance data available to all counselors was suffering. Further, formal relationships with the schools had lessened at this very time when they were most needed.

Meanwhile, public agency managers (like the managers of private agencies and also our employers of Project #1) marveled at the unprepared products of the schools. They could understand and accept the problems of the disadvantaged racial minority applicant or the recent immigrant with a language handicap. They could only splutter at the waste reflected in the middle class cop-outs and dropouts, and puzzle at the "liberal arts graduates with no skills at all," or the high school or college graduate with no knowledge of "anything outside who thinks that the world is waiting for him."

Summing it up, these managers felt that in addition to various other deficiencies neither their staffs nor their work applicants had sufficient knowledge as to the facts of the labor market.

The story in the school counseling departments was analogous to that in the public employment agencies in many respects.

According to our respondents the total counseling effort was impaired by that lack of sufficient staff which was manifested in excessive student/counselor ratios. Better facilities and more clerical help were also listed as required before the counseling program <u>in general</u> could be termed satisfactory.

As to the career guidance content of total counseling, it often ran a poor last because of the understandable demands of educational programming and the fact that the need for assistance in resolving personal and social difficulties was claiming ever greater attention in present student bodies.

Our counselor respondents, however, did not minimize the importance of career guidance. Many deplored the tendency to assume that the student who failed to receive guidance in high school would obtain it in college or somewhere else. They were concerned that there were not course units early in the students' preparation to introduce them to the "world of work," at least vicariously. Many felt that some solution of the problem lay in more work experience courses or in a changed relationship between academic and vocational education in the school curriculum.

As to the possibility of improving the vocational guidance content of counseling, they saw one of their two greatest needs to be more and better information about the labor market. Such data were most frequently defined as "up-to-date information both quantitative and descriptive about local job opportunities."

Along with this need, they said, was the necessity of better staffing and organization for guidance units. This plea often took the form of suggesting that there should be greater specialization within the counseling departments so that at least one person could work full-time at gathering and disseminating job information.

Other matters were also given considerable weight if the quality of vocational guidance was to be improved. Mentioned were more elaborate means of vocational testing so that student potential might be better assessed. Counselors argued for more follow-up studies to learn about the work history of students subsequent to graduation. Except in the Community Colleges which have an enviable record in this respect, a far greater involvement of school counselors and administrators with the outside world of business and industry was recommended. There were many remarks that counselors were not given the proper training for career guidance initially nor much chance to update or expand their knowledge once on-the-job.

And, similarly to the employment managers who wished to see more training opportunities and more job openings for their applicants, counselors believed a basic defect in their programs was the lack of work experience opportunities and of job openings for their students.

Those involved in Project #2 believed we had recorded a considerable indictment against current practice. Going back to the phraseology of Project #1, we had "discovered impedances to the effective functioning of the labor market." Even more important, I believe, we had pointed to some blockages to

that mobility of the citizenry which produces an open society. For where adequate information about training and job opportunities is lacking -- particularly where it is not available to the young -- true freedom of choice as to vocations does not really exist.

Painstaking, plodding research is no great thing (except possibly in the very long term) as an instrument for changing deep-seated public attitudes or for influencing major resource allocations. However, an attempt to devise a comprehensive system for generating and communicating labor market information on a metropolitan area basis does seem a legitimate area of research, especially considering the emphasis placed on such a solution by our respondents in Projects #1 and #2. At least, this was believed to be the case by our sponsoring agency, the Department of Labor's Manpower Administration, which proposed that we undertake a study along these lines.

We are, therefore, now involved in Project #3, a study of the "Requirements and Design of a Comprehensive Labor Market Information System for a Large Metropolitan Labor Market Area."

This study is premised on the assumption that if we were to spell out the needs for information of various users of labor market data we would find that much of the information needed is needed by a variety of users and, hence, should be collected only once.

To be sure, each class of users has its own specific needs which it would wish to supply through its own efforts. Vocational rehabilitation people need to know more about the physical demands of jobs than do other users. Anti-poverty agencies require more information about the social attitudes of employers and less concerning the skill specifications of higher-level jobs than do conventional employment agencies. School administrators need to know a great deal about the exact levels of computational and reading skills required in specific jobs. Agencies concerned with administering the Unemployment

Insurance Act must have a compendious knowledge of the collective bargaining agreements relevant to whole occupations and industries.

However, there is a substratum of information requirements common to many users underlying these more specific needs which we must discover and learn how to supply if we are to go at this matter with any efficiency or cost consciousness. Or if we are to lift the burden of much duplicative reporting and responding from the long-suffering employer.

The geographical scope of the information we are told is needed speaks very plainly to the point of developing a structured system for data collection and delivery. Respondents almost uniformly state a requirement for job information concerning their local communities, their city or their county. However, they want similar data retrievable on demand, though often in less depth, for the entire Bay Area or possibly for the State.

The content of information which is wanted is staggering in its detail and complexity when one begins to think about the foot soldiers needed to collect it or the impact on data sources. Wanted are both the quantitative and locational data to pinpoint local job demand by occupation. An equal, even preponderant weight is given to that mass of descriptive data which spell out the nature of the job, its duties, wages, working conditions, implied life style and the specifications the worker must meet as to skills, training and education.

Demands for information concerning job prospects fortunately are less, not more exacting than we had expected. Here, even the school people are settling for broad trends in their local markets. They are not asking for exact quantitative projections by occupation -- running far into a dim future. I suspect we have all become wiser as well as older when it comes to employment forecasting.

We are finding, too, strongly expressed requirements for small area, reasonably current demographic statistics so that programs (whether school or employment service) can be viewed within the framework of the communities they

serve. And we are finding needs for the program data themselves -- as examples, data showing the total impact of all the manpower and training programs extant in a given community, or data locating and describing all of the current training opportunities in a given area.

However, I will not dwell at any great length on our Project #3 and its general findings to date. I would prefer, to describe one special phase of this latest Project #3. In our efforts to identify needs for labor market information, we have really gone to the grassroots. We decided to ask certain questions of high school students themselves.

Their replies serve so aptly to tie together many of the matters which I have been discussing (and which, more important, educators and manpower officials are now discussing) that I cannot resist the temptation to release the substance of some of their responses prematurely.

I say <u>prematurely</u> with real feeling. These findings are "premature" because they are still incomplete. What I will say about this segment of our study was derived from hand tabulations. As these were exceedingly laborious to construct, we have these data for only the 12th graders. But, for this discussion, we can regard them as the most significant group in the student body. More importantly, though, my speaking about this High School study is premature because I have not yet given any feedback to the school where these data were collected. Thus, the school shall remain nameless or I would be committing a gross breach of the courtesies which should be observed.

What did these 12th graders tell us in their responses? We asked them if they had ever talked with their counselors "about their future work in specific jobs or careers."

Only about half of our 12th grade sample replied affirmatively which appears to bear out the responses of counselors, previously obtained, that career guidance is rather far down on the list of their counseling activities.

Most of this half of the students who had talked to their counselors about their careers checked the box indicating that the matter they talked about was the educational requirements of jobs.

Fewer than half of those who had discussed their future careers with their counselors (or less than one fourth of all the 12th graders sampled) said that there had been any discussion of their own abilities to succeed on these jobs. But more significantly only 6 percent of this entire sample of 12th graders had ever talked over the responsibilities and tasks involved in various careers. This fact would appear to corroborate the lack of any looking out upon the world of work that so many of our counselor respondents had earlier lamented in Project #2. This absence of attention to the world outside might also help to explain the fact that only 10 percent of the entire sample of twelfth graders believed the information they received from their counselors about jobs and careers will prove helpful to them.

Student reactions to published occupational guidance materials (at least at this stage in our questioning) was only somewhat better than it was to the information provided by the counselors.

Again, only slightly more than half of the students replied affirmatively to the question, "Have you ever read any books or pamphlets about jobs or careers?" However, a good proportion of the students had taken the initiative to obtain these publications from the city library. And about half of those who had consulted them found them helpful. In other words, about one quarter of the 12th graders in the sample believed that these books and pamphlets would be helpful to them in their career planning.

When we asked them what they liked about these publications a frequent answer was that "they describe a job in which I am interested."

We asked these 12th graders if they had already decided on the career they would want after they finished high school or college. Of the total sample

46 percent said they had made this decision; 54 percent replied negatively.

To me the most significant response in our entire inquiry was the answer to our next question. We asked those students who had made a career decision (this 46 percent) if they would "like to know more than they do now about the job or career they had selected." All except one of the students who had made a career decision answered that he or she would like more job information.

We had structured this questionnaire in such a way that students who had not decided on their future careers were not asked the following question. Nonetheless, more than one third of this excluded group used the margins and bottom of the page to write in the fact that they, nevertheless, wanted more job information.

Of course, only those students who had made career decisions could be asked, "who or what had helped them to decide upon the job they wished to follow after their graduation from high school or college."

More students checked off "Knowing people in the occupation" than any other "who" or "what." This selection was closely followed by "Courses I am taking," "Parents," and "Other Relatives." I do want you to note the implication of these responses. Three of those four front-runners -- "knowing people in the occupation," "parents," and "other relatives," can offer little help in career decision-making to students whom we hope will exhibit a high degree of upward mobility. It is significant that these selections went almost unmentioned by the sampled black students. These were more likely to give a write-in item such as "I decided," or "it's a field I'm interested in."

I cannot feel certain nor should you, that we are affording free occupational choice to disadvantaged students when we fail to provide strong career guidance programs.

We asked all of the students in the sample (not just those who had made their career decisions) this question -- "If you could find out anything you

want to know about jobs or careers, what do you want to know?" We gave them 10 options, asked them for their four top choices in priority order, and gave them space for write-ins. The students handled this assignment with great gusto and remarkable expertise -- we are raising a generation of excellent subjects for the market research people. When all choices were counted at least half of the students had recorded preferences for a group of five items. In order of frequency these items were:

The training and education needed for various jobs

The skills and interests needed in various jobs

The wages or salary paid on jobs

The kind of life a person is likely to have if he holds a job (the hours worked, working conditions, possibility of travel, life-time income, etc.)

The duties of various jobs.

I would say that this list constitutes an adequate outline of the major requirements of a good guidance document. These five entries were followed closely by one concerned with job prospects -- "whether or not certain jobs can be expected to be plentiful or hard to find in the future."

Quite a bit further down on the list was the popularity of an item about "the probable location of jobs" and very far down was choice of the item -- "the kinds of jobs where you can help people."

We followed the same tactic of devising a multi-choice, priority-of-choice question to ask the students: "If you could obtain more information about jobs or careers, how would you most like to get this information?"

Again our 12th graders went to work with real enthusiasm on this question. I happen to believe that they turned in a response which has a message not solely or even primarily for school counselors but for school administrators, manpower officials, and most definitely for employers and the community at large.

Eighty four percent of all the students who replied (and all of them did) siad that they would like to receive their information about jobs "by visiting places where the jobs are and actually seeing the work performed." So we can say without qualification that this method of delivering job information was the winner.

Interestingly, the students then worked through our long list of options and selected a runner-up that was not too dissimilar -- "by working part-time or in summer."

A third choice was "by being enrolled in a vocational work-experience program," -- and this from college prep and general course students as well as from those in vocational education programs.

In a way, these responses could be construed as a great victory for McLuhan for he has spoken about our turning away from the printed page in favor of more direct types of experience. And I have listened to many an argument extolling the virtues of nonverbal counseling materials.

Nonetheless, the fourth most frequently mentioned preference of these students was "reading about jobs." And tying for fifth place were "World of Work Courses describing many jobs" and "visiting a Career Center."

Even the much maligned counselor (to be sure, rather far down on the list as a favorite agent for conveying job information) managed a tie vote with "watching films, film strips or television programs about jobs."

And so we have talked of many matters that are related to occupations, to values, and to survival. One matter that more often than not is very closely related to survival is ACTION -- and that I have <u>not</u> mentioned.

I intend to mention it in closing my remarks by way of reading you a little note that one of these twelfth graders wrote at the bottom of our six page questionnaire -- once it had been meticulously completed. I was more than ordinarily affected by this note because as a meddlesome researcher I'm not used to receiving sympathy from respondents -- not even misplaced sympathy.

To give you a little background about this respondent: Our twelfth grader is a girl; she is white; she is enrolled in a College Prep program; her father is a statistician and her mother works for a government agency.

I rather suspect she is of a practical turn of mind. She specified her choices as to what she would like to know about jobs in this order:

1. Wages or salaries
2. The kinds of jobs likely to be plentiful or scarce in the future
3. The location of jobs
4. The duties of jobs.

She would most like to obtain what she wants to know about jobs by:

1. Visiting places where the job is performed
2. Working part-time or in summer
3. Enrolling in a vocational work-experience program.

She had talked to her counselor but said it didn't help. She hasn't made a career decision yet, and she plans to enter college following her graduation from high school.

This is what she wrote at the end of her questionnaire:

> "I really feel sorry for you. These kinds of surveys really are not helping the situation at all. Everyone is busy setting up committees and all -- but nothing is <u>ever</u> done about it...It is too bad that you have to go through with this. Maybe you should take <u>action</u> about it. Power to the People!"

End of quote!

End of my remarks!